Lexden Camp Site 1919 to 1949

Verbatim from the book - History of the Natal Gilwell Boy Scout training camp - "Lexden", Pietermaritzburg, from its inception in 1919 to December 31st 1949.

By H. V. Marsh, J. P. (M'hlatini), Deputy Camp Chief: 1926 to 1945

Edited by Jack Withey

**===Where the names come from===**

[[File:Lexden Badge.jpg|200px|right|thumb]]

For the information of future generations of those interested in Scouting in South Africa, it has been considered advisable to place on record now an authentic account of the Natal Gilwell Training Camp, "Lexden" Pietermaritzburg, from its early days up to the present time. So the following chapters have been compiled with this object in view.

It is founded on the lines of the parent Gilwell in Epping Forest, near London, where the training of Scoutmasters is undertaken, and the standard and curriculum set for Training Courses wherever the Scout movement exists, both for English speaking and foreign races.

The "Lexden" Camp is recognised as being the foremost in Africa and holds, indeed, a high position in those already established in various parts of the world.

"Gilwell" is the name of one of the old hunting lodges in Epping Forest used by Henry VIII. The estate of about fifty-seven acres was presented to Imperial Headquarters of the Boy Scouts Association by Mr. de Bois MacLaren in 1919, as an official training centre, and to provide camping sites for Scouts. It is upon this parent Gilwell that all other training centres throughout the world are fashioned.

Those Scouters who pass the various tests required of them wherever those examinations are undertaken, are entitled to wear upon the flap of their grey scarves a small square of the MacLaren tartan and thus become members of what is called "The 1st Gilwell Park Troop". There are thousands of these qualified men now scattered all over the world, some of whom have been passed through the Natal Gilwell Courses.

Like the English Gilwell, the Camp in Pietermaritzburg is available both for the training of Officers in the Movement and for camping by Rovers, Scouts and Wolf Cubs from any part of the Union who come under the jurisdiction of the Council of the South African Boy Scouts Association.

The name "Lexden" was given, forty-seven years ago, to the homestead and estate of the first Natal Deputy Camp Chief, H. V. Marsh, which adjoins the Camp and of which the first portion of "Gilwell" formed a part. It is the name of a very beautiful little village near Colchester, Essex, where the Deputy Camp Chief was born.

## ===Early Beginnings===

[[File:Lexden Sketch of H V Marsh 1936.jpg|200px|right|thumb]]

One day in May or June, 1922, Mr. A. F. Hattersley - who was then Assistant Divisional Commissioner under Commissioner Daniel Sanders - walked into Mr. H. V. Marsh's office in Pietermaritzburg, and took his breath away by making the brief, pointed statement "l want you to be District Scoutmaster for Maritzburg". For some two or three years previous to this interview, part of the "Lexden" estate, the home of Mr. and Mrs. H. V. Marsh, had been available for Scouts to camp. In those days what is now the present camp was used as cattle paddocks and was, of course, in a rough state, with the exception of that large, flat portion now known as the main Parade Ground. It was upon this level piece that the first Scout Camp at "Lexden" took place, in 1919, when S. M. A. F. Hattersley conducted a Training Camp for Patrol Leaders and Seconds of the 6th Pietermaritzburg Troop (St. Saviour's).

The interest created in Scouting by these early camps led to the incident recorded above and then to the acceptance of the request to take out the Warrant referred to. This eventually led to the permanent establishment of the "Lexden" Gilwell.

This main Parade Ground was the first piece of land to be made available for Scouting and a word here regarding it may be of interest. Prior to its purchase by Mr. H. V. Marsh it belonged to a Mr. C. J. Gray; Commissioner of Mines, who lived in a wood and iron house (which has since been removed) on that portion which faced the main Howick Road. Early each morning he and his good wife used to get up and dig out the earth on the high part, wheeling it and tipping it lower down to level up the site. When completed they used it as a tennis court and games ground. Our Scouts to-day little realise how grateful they should be to these two energetic people for all this work, for the ground they levelled so long ago is used, every time anyone comes to camp, in just the condition in which Mr. and Mrs. Gray left it in 1918.

In 1920 the 3rd Maritzburg Troop "Scoutholm", under S.M. A. F. Hattersley, had their first camp at "Lexden" and it is on record that later on the 6th Maritzburg and the Merchiston School Troop were among the early ones to make use of it.

In 1921 or 1922 another piece of adjoining land was made available for camping, extending the area to two and-a-half acres and in June, 1927 another acre was added, the whole being lent to Scouting by the owners of the "Lexden" homestead.

The first Deputy Camp Chief in Natal as the Officer in Charge of Training is designated - Mr. H. V. Marsh, was appointed on August, 17th, 1926, after his return from England, where he had taken a Course of Training at the English Gilwell under Camp Chief J. Wilson. The first Scouters' Wood Badge Training Course was conducted at "Lexden", under his charge. Commencing on 22nd October, 1927, the Course was conducted at week-ends and concluded on 4th March, 1928.

## ===The Development of Gilwell===

Happily for the Camp the boundary on the North side was Town Lands. Finding the original portion small for the needs of Scouting, it was decided to approach the Pietermaritzburg City Council for a grant of additional land to provide more scope for our activities. Accordingly the application was made and the City Councillors came up to inspect the land applied for on March 8th, 1928. They recognised the value of Scout Training and readily granted the loan of a piece about four and-a-half acres in extent "during their pleasure".

On September the 1st of that year the Official Opening took place by His Worship the Mayor, Councillor D. C. Dick, in the presence of a large number of Scouts and friends, the ceremony taking place on the site of what became known later as "The Springbok Circle". An archway, named "Dick's Door" was specially erected for the occasion, and still stands to commemorate this important event.

During the years which followed, this very valuable extension was cleared of the rank veldt grass and short, running grass was planted in its place. Several features, such as the Open-air Chapel, Pylon, Main Avenue, Rover Chapel, etc., were laid out, each of which will be more fully described later on in these chapters.

Still needing more land, particularly for Indian, Native and Coloured boys, and in view of the development of roads, etc. in the vicinity, the Natal Scout Council again applied, early in 1937, for that portion of the land which was bounded by the then existing Camp and the main Howick Road, about another four and-a-half acres in extent. Again the members of the Council made a personal inspection and on March 22nd, 1937, the request was willingly granted, on the same terms as before. On May 20th., 1937, the permanent gift to the Natal Scout Council of the original portion of the Camp which had been in use since 1919, of about three and-a-half acres, was made by the Deputy Camp Chief and Mrs. H. V. Marsh, the act of the handing over of the Trust and Title Deeds being carried out at a meeting of the Natal Scout Council in Pietermaritzburg. This gift placed the Camp, definitely, on a permanent basis and secured for the future a firm foundation for further development.

The three permanent Trustees are the Officials holding the Offices of Mayor of Pietermaritzburg, the Manager of Barclay's Bank, D.C.O., Pietermaritzburg and the Natal Divisional Commissioner of the Boy Scouts Association.

With the object of further securing the future of the whole Camp so that it could be assured of an uninterrupted and permanent occupation, the request was made early in 1939 to the City Council, that they should make a definite gift of the nine acres at present held "during their pleasure", to the Natal Scout Council, on the condition that should it cease to be used for Scout purposes it should revert to the Municipality.

The City Councillors again showed their appreciation of the value of Scouting by unanimously recommending that the request be granted and in December, 1939, confirmation was granted by His Honour, The Administrator, Mr. H. Gordon Watson.

This, and other instances of practical public interest, have been of very great encouragement to all those engaged in Scouting in Natal. The total area of about twelve and-a-half acres should prove sufficient for all needs. Already almost all of it, except the far North-West corner, is in use.

## ===The "Vick Eddy" Arch===

[[File:Lexden Vick Eddy Arch.jpg|200px|right|thumb]]

As the [[BP's visit to South Africa in 1936|visit]] of Lord and Lady Baden-Powell to the "Lexden" Camp on February the 23rd, 1936, coincided with their joint birthdays, (February, 22nd), it was decided that the event should be suitably recognized by the presentation to them of something permanent. So an arch, supporting a bell was decided upon, into which quite a lot of symbolism had been incorporated.

The spot selected for its erection was one for which all the early Scouts and Rovers had a special regard, that is, the first Camp Fire Council site. The stumps of the very old trees which had sheltered that revered spot, still remained at this time. Here then, a plain arch of three fourteen inch (35cm) by fourteen inch jarrah logs was erected, on heavy concrete bases, weighing about five tons in all, just where the old logs used to burn so brightly. From the top bearer was hung an old ship's bell.

(For the information of the uninitiated it may be mentioned that "Vick Eddy" or "V.E." is the "calling up" signal in Morse and Semaphore).

Seated on one of these old tree stumps at the presentation ceremony, the dear old Chief spoke first to the Wolf Cubs, then the Scouts, then the Rovers, then the General Public, calling them up in their several spheres, to service in the ideals of Scouting. Then both he and Lady Baden-Powell rang a signal on the bell to officially inaugurate it. The Chief was informed that the Arch was his, and he could take it away with him if he wished, but he replied "he thought he would like to leave it at "Lexden"!

Quite a lot of history attaches to the bell. Cast on it is the name "S.S . Metagama", which was an old Pacific liner plying from Liverpool to Canada during the Great War, and which was chased several times by enemy submarines, but which she always successfully eluded. There is a little village named Metagama on a river of the same name in Canada which runs into Lake Huron. It is an Indian word meaning "A river widening out into a Lake".

When the bell was rung every half-hour oh board during the night the Watchman called out "All's well. Lights are burning bright, Sir".

And so, as the final act of our Training Courses, and prior to our annual Scout's Own Services, when the "Vick Eddy" is struck, the lads Pass under the Arch, saluting as they go through, thus typifying the young life passing on into manhood with its greater and wider spheres and opportunities, like the river widening out into the lake, agreeing to do their best to keep the lights of Scouting burning brightly as they pass upon their way.

The long main avenue of trees leading North-West from the Council Circle, the sides of which are lined with officially planted trees, widens out as it goes towards the far outlet of the Camp, thus symbolizing the river.

The bell was purchased in East London, Cape Province - how it arrived here is not known. It was the gift of Mrs. H. V. Marsh and the Union Castle shipped it to Durban free of charge.

The jarrah logs were donated, by Messrs. Millars West Australian Hardwood Company of Durban.

## ===The "Pylon"===

One of the most prominent objects of interest in the Camp is a tall concrete column, known as "The Pylon". This bears a tablet which reads:-

"Those whose footprints are here have been deemed<br>

by their Brothers as Worthy of Honour, in that<br>

they are outstanding in good Scout work, character<br>

and influence".

At the foot of the column, forming an edging to the "Path of Honour" leading up to the Open-air Chapel, are some nineteen concrete blocks, each having the impression of a bare foot of some Wolf Cub, Scout, Rover or Officer, who has been selected for the honour by those of his own Group. This is a personal honour which any section of any Group can, at any time, confer on one of its own number who fulfils the requirements mentioned in the inscription referred to.

The recommendation for Scouts is made through the Court of Honour - not through the Group Officers, though of course the Officers are referred to for a report before acceptance is given - so that the honour is one conferred by the boys themselves directly upon one of their own number, and therefore creates a far greater effect upon the recipient.

"Lexden" was the first Camp to have this particular scheme put into operation, but other parts of the world have now copied it.

When the Chief Scout, Lord Baden-Powell, [[BP's visit to South Africa in 1931|visited]] "Lexden" on June 10th, 1931, he was greatly impressed by it. On being asked if he would consent to his own footprint being taken so that it could be laid in the line, he readily consented. So, arrangements having been made before hand in anticipation, a Rover - Walter Turner, 5th Maritzburg Crew - deftly prepared the wet cement in the wash-house, to which the Chief was conducted for the operation. "Ooh! It's cold", he said as he put in his foot. (The D. C. C. has regretted ever since not having had the cement mixed with hot water!) Anyway, he was very sporting about it and mentioned it was the first time he had ever had his footprint taken.

The block was laid in position a few days later, at the head of the line. Now, each time a new block comes to be laid, the Chief's print is lifted, the new block is laid in its place and a new position, is dug for the Chef's at the head, of the line. His footprint is always leading; each new print is laid where the Chief's own print has been; the owner of the new impression has the honour of being placed next to that of the Chief's for a time, until another new one comes along; and all the prints are following his lead.

It was not without intention that a strong, cement column was selected to stand at the base of the line, for it is symbolic of permanence, beauty, strength and character.

It may be of interest to mention that great difficulty was experienced in finding a suitable foundation on which to erect it for, strange to say, about three feet under the surface at that part of the Camp, even although it is almost the highest point, soft mud was encountered. Eventually, the system adopted for the buildings in Venice was adopted, with success, that is the driving in of deep piles which were covered with a large slab of concrete upon which the column now securely stands.

Many of those whose footprints are there have written referring to the effect this tribute from their pals has had upon them. All of them are still alive at the time these notes are written, with the exception of one lad, who was Called Home just after he left school.

A "Roll of Honour Book" is kept with the Camp archives, comprising a complete list of the names and records of those who are selected for the scheme.

'''"The Pylon"'''

Record taken from the details in The Roll of Honour Book.

{| class="wikitable"

! No of Print !! Laid in Position !! Year !! !! Recipient of Honour.

|-

| 1 || July, || 1930 || || Guthrie, J. de Vallence.

|-

| 2 || 23rd May, || 1930 || || Dibben, Denys E.

|-

| 3 || 23rd May, || 1930 || || Robinson, A.L.

|-

| 4 || November, || 1930 || || Lambie, A. A.

|-

| 5 || November, || 1930 || || Barry, Jacobus.

|-

| B-P || 15th June, || 1931 || || Lord Baden-Powell, Chief Scout •

|-

| 6 || 13th February, || 1932 || || Gibson, R. J.

|-

| 7 || 28th February, || 1932 || || Peck, J. E. Lancelot.

|-

| 8 || || 1933 || || Clemmans, E.H. Natal Divisional Commissioner.

|-

| 9 || || 1933 || || Tonkin, . R. W.

|-

| 10 || 4th October, || 1935 || || Strachan, H. P.

|-

| 11 || 3rd October, || 1935 || || Knotwell, J. W

|-

| 12 || 16th November, || 1935 || || Chivers, V. B.

|-

| 13 || 21st November, || 1935 || || van Heerden, C. J.

|-

| 14 || 27th November, || 1935 || || Rodes, F. G.

|-

| 15 || 24th March, || 1939 || || Nell, Lucas.

|-

| 16 || 10th May, || 1939 || || Holliday, Donald G.

|-

| 17 || 6th October, || 1947 || || Marsh, H. V. Deputy Camp Chief.

|-

| 18 || 5th September, || 1948 || || Downham, B. C.

|-

| 19 || 24th April, || 1949 || || Withey, Jack.

|-

| 20 || 4th March, || 1950 || || Lord Rowallan, Chief Scout.

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## ===The Camp Open-Air Chapel===

[[File:Lexden Alfred Pickford and Kenneth Fleischer June 1930.jpg|200px|right|thumb]]

Our Chapel site had been laid out for a short while before Headquarters Commissioner Sir Alfred Pickford paid us a visit, so his presence gave us the opportunity to ask him to inaugurate it, which he willingly did on the 29th June, 1930.

Inspired by its beautiful view and surroundings he took as the subject of his address "Look Wide".

It stands on the highest point in the Camp. Round its upper circumference a ring of trees has been planted, mostly by relatives of Scouts who were killed in World War I, and on the inside is a semicircle of flowering bushes planted by members of a Scout Wood Badge Training Course. One of the outside trees is a yellow-wood in memory of Scoutmaster A. E. Kershaw, one of our earliest and most revered workers, planted there by his widow.

The centre is occupied by an Indian mahogany tree planted by the Chief Scout, Lord Baden-Powell on June 10th, 1931, under the shade of which we are now able to gather on hot sunny mornings for "Scouts Own" Services, for it has grown well and quickly.

It is a hallowed spot, and many and moving Addresses have been delivered there. Some Rovers used it for their Vigil, and all the Services during Wood Badge Training Courses are conducted there. The "Pathway of Honour", so named by B-P himself, formed of footprints, leads from "The Pylon" up towards the Chapel.

One very happy incident took place here on June 1st, 1935, when Scoutmaster A. A. Lambie was married to Miss Jess Volans, one of the most perfect days the weather could have given.

## ===The Scout Hall===

The need for a suitable building where Training Sessions could be conducted in comfort and efficiency during wet or cold weather, and to give shelter to campers when our sudden storms come on, had been evident ever since Training Courses had been instituted.

A wood and iron lean-to shed, without lining, ceiling or proper floor, had been used as a makeshift, and the wonder now is how we managed with it for so long a time.

On April 12th, 1934, the members of the Pietermaritzburg Rotary Club, who had always taken an active interest in Boys' work, came up to the Camp for a. picnic lunch, and an inspection, of the grounds afterwards. They were so impressed that shortly afterwards they made an offer to raise sufficient funds to build a suitable Hall, etc. which, needless to say, was most gratefully accepted. They set to work at once to collect funds, whilst preliminary plans were thought out.

On June 8th, 1935, the opportunity was taken of the visit to the Camp of the Chief Scout for South, Arica, Lord Clarendon, to ask him to lay the foundation stone, which he graciously and willingly consented to do. It was a beautiful afternoon and the ceremony, which was attended by many friends as well as Scouts, went through without a hitch. A silver trowel, suitably inscribed, was presented to His Excellency by Rotarian J. H. Farrant. The mallet and the handle of the trowel were both made from wood grown in the Camp. The marble foundation stone and inscription was the gift of Mr. Harold Smith of Pietermaritzburg.

Meanwhile, the collection of funds went on.

[[File:Lexden Scout Hall.jpg|200px|right|thumb]]

Through the courtesy of His Worship the Mayor, Councillor F. J. Lewis, the City Engineer, Mr. D. H. Darvil, was allowed to prepare the final plans and specifications, and Scouting owes a great debt of gratitude to Mr. Darvil for his tremendous personal interest in the scheme, both as City Engineer and as a Rotarian.

Time went on and eventually tenders were called for, with the result that the tender of Messrs. Wilson & Grant was accepted and on June 8th, 1937, the first sods were unofficially cut by Deputy Camp Chief and Mrs. H. V. Marsh, and the building was commenced.

The official Opening of the Hall was performed by the Mayor (Mr. F. J. Lewis) on the 4th September, 1937, on one of the coldest afternoons ever experienced. This did not prevent the assembly of a large number of friends and Scouts. Rotarian President R. Thornton-Dibb, on behalf of Rotary, made the formal presentation of the building to the Natal Scout Council.

During the ceremony "Thanks" Badges were presented by a Scout to Messrs. D. H. Darvil, L. F. Forsyth, the Chairman of the Rotary Scout Hall Committee, and E. Varley, the Honorary Secretary of that Committee, in recognition of their highly appreciated and successful services.

The site of the building is on the North-East boundary, just above the "Vick Eddy" Arch, on the first piece of land donated to the Natal Scout Council. The Hall is of brick, forty feet by twenty feet; and behind are two store rooms for equipment, games, etc. and an office, all under a tile roof, with concrete floors. In front is a most useful wide verandah. The total cost was £718, to which two anonymous friends each donated £100, and to whom "Thanks" Badges were also awarded.

Right from the opening day its erection has more than justified the kind thought and work of the Pietermaritzburg Rotarians.

## ===The Council Circle and Camp Fire Sites===

[[File:Lexden Camp Fire and Council site.jpg|200px|right|thumb]]

The first Camp Fire and Council site was formed under three huge old wattles, on the spot where B-P's "Vick Eddy" Arch now stands.

That can be said to be the life centre from which flowed the influence and Scouty atmosphere which has built up the whole Camp.

Under their wide-spreading branches the never-to-be-forgotten early Rover Investitures were carried through, with "Squarelaw" Divisional Commissioner E. H. Clemmans presiding.

The Duke of Kent, the Earls of Athlone and Clarendon, the Chief Scout, Lord Baden-Powell, and many other notable men and women have spoken or signed the Visitors' Book there. Wood Badge Training Course Sessions and hundreds of Camp Fires took place in that much-loved spot.

In course of time the old trees decayed, and one by one were lopped or cut down. It was during this period, before the stumps were finally removed, that B-P sat on one of them to accept the birthday gift of the "Vick Eddy" Arch, on February 23rd, 1936.

The eventual loss of the trees had been anticipated years before and a new Council site had been prepared quite close to it, which was first used and inaugurated on June 8th, 1935, with a huge Camp Fire and Sing-Song, which followed the laying, that afternoon, of the Foundation Stone of the Hall by Lord Clarendon.

One of the trees round this new circle, a yellow-wood, had been planted by [[BP's visit to South Africa in 1931|B-P during his visit]] of June 10th, 1931, and had become well grown by the date of the formal opening. Others had been planted by Divisional Commissioner E. H. Clemmans, Deputy Camp Chief H. V. Marsh, Mrs.' H. V. Marsh, Scoutmaster A. T. Shores, known as "Daddy", who had travelled some 1,100 miles in attending the several week-end meetings of the first Scouters' Wood Badge Training Course, J. Withey at the first Rover Indaba, one anonymously and one by District Commissioner Captain Fergusson, since deceased.

The same influence and atmosphere emanate from this new site as from the first one, which will be the case, it is hoped, for as long as the Camp is used for its present purposes.

There is a second, Camp Fire site below "The Pylon", higher up the grounds, in the rough, which is surrounded by gum trees, planted by Nature, discovered almost by accident. No cutting down or altering was necessary - it was just a natural site. Boys camping up that end use it for their shows and the Pathfinders for their Training Course sessions etc. Not having been specially laid out from the beginning makes it all the more attractive to some than the older, Official Council Circle. The light of the fire on the leaves and branches high up in the air on a dark night, with the sounds of the songs of the youngsters, is one which is not quickly forgotten. Many a happy time is spent there.

When the camp is full of boys both sites are in use by different Troops.

## ==="Dick's Door"===

The formal opening of the first additional grant of land from the Pietermaritzburg City Council by His Worship The Mayor, Councillor D. C. Dick, was a very important day in the history of the Camp.

Previous to the grant being made, and in response to a request being preferred by the Camp Committee, the whole Council visited the site and went over that portion of the ground which constituted the upper half of the land lying between Hosking Road and a line parallel with the back boundary of Mr. Mason's property. After the inspection information was conveyed to us that the land was granted for Scouting purposes, "during their pleasure".

To mark the great event, and the appreciation of the Council in the work being done there, "Dick's Door" was specially erected.

At this Arch, on September 1st, 1928, the Mayor cut a cord and passing under it with the Administrator and others went to the "Springbok Circle" where the general public had assembled for the formal opening ceremony. Both the Administrator and the Mayor addressed the gathering, and grateful thanks were formally conveyed by a Scout on behalf of all Scouts and Cubs.

Afterwards, trees were officially planted by The Administrator Mr. H. Gordon Watson, The Mayor, D. Sanders the Divisional Commissioner, Mr. H. Withey, President of the Pietermaritzburg and District Local Association, Mr. H. V. Marsh the Deputy Camp Chief and Mrs. Marsh, and by a Scout selected by ballot to represent all Rovers, Scouts and Cubs.

The logs of which the Arch is composed came from the Point, Durban, being some old piles from a wharf. The two uprights were cut in half lengthways from the same log. Holes, to take ropes, which had been bored in them at some early date in their history, were unintentionally reversed when fixing those in the log, nearest Hosking Road being near the ground level, whilst in the other one they came at; about eye level. By some accident and curious chance, the holes on the lower upright focussed directly and exactly around the distant Municipal Water Purification Works building on the sky-line above Edendale, some miles away. This was not noticed until some time after erection and was, of course, absolutely unintentional.

Some "wag" suggested that the wording "Purification for Peeping People" would be appropriate so a little tablet was prepared and fixed round one hole, recording this incident.

The side of the Archway bears an inscription giving the name of the Mayor and the date this addition was formally handed over.

## ===The "Springbok Circle"===

In the dim and distant past some unknown pioneers had dug an irregular crescent in what is now the Camp, for some purpose of their own, leaving the surface more or less level inside. Most likely their wagons had bogged down on a nearby trail, and the surface was required to mend the trouble.

Be that as it may, it is in a most convenient spot for our Upper Parade Ground. Very little work was required to improve it to its present shape and so it became adapted to suit our needs and we thank our unknown friends for the good turn they quite unintentionally did us.

A flag pole was erected in the centre.

Here, on April 5th, 1931, during the closing hours of the first [[Rover SARSI: 1931 Report|South African Rover Indaba]], official trees were planted by Rovers representing all the Divisions in South Africa and Southern Rhodesia.

When a name was sought for the site it was the late Major A. L. Pepper who suggested "Springbok Circle" and it has been so called ever since.

The trees all round it are Queensland Jasmine. They have large, yellow, star-like flowers, thus exemplifying the two Scout colours, green and yellow, though this was not arranged purposely when this type of tree was selected.

The bronze weather-vane fixed on top of the flag pole was donated to the Camp by the members of the 1st Rover Scout Leaders' Training Course and was erected on December 8th, 1932 as an expression of appreciation of their Course held in the previous May. It was made by Divisional Commissioner R. Okell, who doubtless inspired the welcome gift.

The four points of the compass indicated by the Scout arrow head, the Wood Pigeon, the Bat, and the Peewit, the three Patrol emblems used at all our Wood Badge Scout Training Courses. The pointer or indicator of the vane is in the shape of a buck.

When the South African contingent of Scouts went to the Jamboree in England in 1924, they each wore a small black ostrich feather in their hats. Friends in England asked them what kind of feathers they were and received the reply "Springbok tail feathers"!

Two Scouts were standing in the "Springbok Circle" at "Lexden" one day when the above yarn cropped up. Said one to the other, "Have you ever seen feathers on the tail of a Springbok, Joe?", "No, of course not", he replied. "Well, look up there and you'll see them". And there, sure enough, on the tail of the indicator, was seated a lonely Jackie Hangman!

The pole was originally much higher, but a great storm one day broke off about eight feet, fortunately without much damage to the vane, which was quickly and easily re-fixed.

## ===The Coronation Gateway===

With the development of Hosking Road and the building of the Hall, it was found advisable to provide an additional entrance from Hosking Road, right opposite the first existing one on the main road to Johannesburg, but no funds were available.

During the term of office of Mr. R. Okell as Divisional Commissioner, a scheme was started by him resulting in pennies and tickeys being subscribed by Scouts and Cubs throughout Natal for the purpose of erecting an archway of an imposing nature.

As the date coincided with the accession of King George VI it was decided to designate it the "Coronation Gateway".

The formal opening took place on June 11th, 1939, by Divisional Commissioner R. Okell, who was presented with a nine-inch set of mock Wood Badge beads to commemorate his successful active interest and assistance in raising the necessary funds.

The hardwood lintel on top of the brick piers bears the wording "Lexden Boy Scout Training Camp" on the road face and on the inside face "Coronation Gateway, 1937".

It has been found to be a much safer entrance on account of the sharp turn, the very steep grade, and fast and ever-increasing traffic on the main road and is, in consequence, a greatly valued amenity. Often Corporation buses bring up loads of boys and their kit and collect them there again, away from the risks of the main road.

## ===The Trees and Lawns===

[[File:Lexden Trees and Lawns.jpg|200px|right|thumb]]

No account of "Lexden" would be complete without reference to the trees which have so transformed its appearance since the early days of rank grass and bare veldt. It can be easily appreciated how the lack of shade handicapped camping then for none whatever existed except that from a few old, self-sown wattles, such as those referred to which formed the first Camp Fire site.

In those early days, as old photographs show, the first thing to do was to clear away the long, wild grass to prevent the risk of fire and then make the land easily usable. Each year some additional land was turned over by hand, the grass roots removed, and short, running grass planted in place thereof.

The first tree officially planted was on December 1st, 1927, during the first Natal Rover Indaba at the new Council Circle. Since then about one hundred trees have been placed in position by notable visitors, Troops or individuals who have camped there by the date these notes were written.

Foremost mention must be made of the oak planted by the late Prince George, Duke of Kent, in the centre of the "Springbok Circle" on March 3rd, 1934 which, together with the two planted by the late Chief Scout, Lord Baden-Powell, are the three we most value.

One of the Chief's occupies the centre of the Open-air Chapel (an Indian mahogany) and the other is a yellow-wood in the new Council Circle, both planted by him on June 10th, 1931. He was requested to plant two so that if one died he would have one left for certain. The yellow-wood was specially chosen because of its anticipated long life. (The section of that variety of tree in the Hall brought from Kharkloof started its life over six hundred years ago).

These three trees are doing exceedingly well, as is the general experience for very few indeed have died.

Other notable ones are those planted by the Chief Scouts for the Union during their several visits to the Camp, by Headquarters Commissioners from England, by Lady Baden-Powell, etc.

Every Scout and Cub Wood Badge Course has taken the opportunity of recording their Training period in this way.

The Camp now holds many living individual links, with those who have come under its influence and Training. It is a common experience for old boys - now grown to manhood - to call in to see how their trees are growing, thus renewing the memories of previous happy days.

Mention must be made here of the special spade bought for Prince George to use, which has been used ever since for all official tree plantings, upon the handle of which is recorded each event as it takes place. It is kept in the Hall.

It is strange that the "Lexden" Camp should experience so many curious and "would-you-believe-it" incidents, several of which are referred to else-where, in their places in this narrative.

There is a gum tree, grown from wind-strewn seed in the upper portion of the Camp, now about twelve inches diameter, which comes in this category. Some years before it was noticed the point of one of its branches, which sprang out low down, got tuned into the main trunk by some inexplicable means and got caught permanently and continued to grow up inside the main trunk! As the years went on this branch grew to be four inches in diameter. The main tree, then about thirty feet high, naturally swayed about in the wind which, one day, broke off at its lower end this strangely acting branch, leaving it looking like a pole driven into the tree at an angle. It was just at this time that the curiosity was discovered and it was noticed that the broken, jagged end of the projecting piece coincided exactly with the remainder against the tree trunk, so there was no possible doubt as to the source of the "pole".

No one, of the many to whom it has been shown, has ever seen a similar occurrence, and one wonders if it is unique.

Several attempts have been made to grow live fences along the Camp road frontages to give the privacy campers like to have. The most successful has been the dwarf bamboo adjoining the Hall which has grown excellently. Although bamboo was planted all along the Hosking Road frontage at the same time, it just refused to grow beyond the spot where the fence now stops. Previous attempts had been made with bougainvillea, lantana and hawthorn, with only very patchy success.

In October, 1947, the Chairman of the Gilwell Camp Committee, Mr. C. B. I. Porter, very kindly donated and planted Hakea Saligna round the whole remaining boundaries which to-day promises to be quite successful.

## ==="Old Faithful"===

For many years the Camp had the services of a very fine Native named Ntulini Mapumulo, who was one of the old type of "boys" who worked uninterrupted, without constant supervision, as hard as it was possible for anyone to work. He was responsible for the removal of most of the veldt grass, and the planting of the running variety, in addition to the care of the trees and equipment generally.

Previously he had worked for the Deputy Camp Chief privately, and had a total service period of about forty years.

During a holiday period at his kraal in the Umgeni Location he contracted T.B., which unfortunately developed very quickly and he died in July, 1946, in spite of careful treatment at the Isolation Hospital here.

It is just that tribute should be paid to this faithful and devoted old servant.

## ===The First Law Pole===

[[File:Lexden First Law Pole.jpg|200px|right|thumb]]

One of the most curious coincidences which could possibly be imagined occurred in connection with the first Scout Law Pole erected in the Camp, so curious in fact, as to be almost unbelievable.

About 1926 or 1927 a rough slab of cypress was obtained at a local Sawmill. Upon the face of it was carved the wording "The Scout Law is the Law of this Camp", with the Scout crest at his head. After it had been standing for some time, the carbolineum with which it had been treated began to fade, when there appeared a perfect Wolf head above the Scout crest, formed by two knots for the eyes, the nose and top of the head being perfectly outlined by the grain, and one upright ear by another long knot. The eye knots had radial cracks from their centres, thus giving them a lifelike appearance.

A little Wolf Cub first made the discovery and called attention to it, when its value was at once recognised. The pole was thereupon removed and kept under cover to prevent its decay, until the Hall was built, when it was placed in its present position in the building.

A new Law Pole was erected in Camp in August, 1930, bearing the same wording as its predecessor, but this time the wolf head has also been carved upon it! It is too much to expect such & coincidence to occur twice!!

Just a word about the Law Pole itself. There were no written Camp Rules or Regulations at this time, and none were thought to be necessary, for the wording carved upon its face covered everything that could possibly be required. And so indeed, it has proved to be. Boys have been observed standing studying it, then turning silently away, taking with them the influence and message it so quietly conveys. It has always set the whole tone of the Camp and much of the atmosphere which is so evident as to be almost felt, can be traced to its presence.

## ===The Training Courses===

As the chief object in the establishment of the Camp is the training of Officers for the Boy Scout Movement, it may be of interest to record here the details of the official Courses which have been conducted since the Camp was empowered and privileged to arrange them.

Here they are:

{| class="wikitable"

! Wood Badge Scouters Courses.

|-

| 1st || October 22nd to December 4th || 1927 ||

|-

| 2nd || October 2nd to October 11th || 1928 ||

|-

| 3rd || August to November || 1930 ||

|-

| 4th || August to November || 1932 || (Partly held in Durban)

|-

| 5th || March to May || 1936 ||

|-

| 6th || February to March || 1939 ||

|-

| 7th || October 4th to October 13th || 1946 || (First-after the War)

|-

| 8th || April 19th to April 26th || 1949 ||

|-

! Cubmasters Wood Badge Courses.

|-

| 1st || June to July || 1932 || (Held in Durban)

|-

| 2nd || July 1939. || ||

|-

| 3rd || July 6th to July 20th || 1941 ||

|-

| 4th || March to April || 1945 || (Held in Durban)

|-

| 5th || April 19th to April 22nd || 1946 ||

|-

! Rover Scout Leaders Course.

|-

| 1st || April || 1932 ||

|-

|-

! Patrol Leaders Training Courses.

|-

| 1st || March to May || 1929 ||

|-

| 2nd || September to October || 1931 ||

|-

| 3rd || March to May || 1935 ||

|-

| 4th || October 9th to October 30th || 1937 ||

|-

| 5th || April 21st to April 28th || 1940 ||

|-

| 6th || February 28th to March 6th || 1948 ||

|}

A Scout Wood Badge Course was conducted by the Deputy Camp Chief H. V. Marsh in East London, Cape Province, from September 29th to October 9th, 1934, with the assistance of their local Assistant Commissioner.

Pathfinder Courses for Native School teachers have been held under their Pathfinder Commissioner for Natal, Mr. D. McK. Malcolm, assisted by Mr. S. B. Theunissen, Mr. S. Dent, Mr. J. A. Reuling, The Deputy Camp Chief and others in 1931, 1933, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1938, 1940, 1942, 1943, 1945, 1946, 1947, 1948 and 1949.

One Indian Course for Schoolmasters was conducted by the Deputy Camp Chief from January 7th to the 15th, 1938, with the assistance of Mr. A. T. Shores and Mr. J. A. Reuling as Assistant Scoutmasters, with a most enthusiastic attendance of thirty.

Dry facts like the above are not very interesting, but if they were clothed with the warm fellowship, friendliness, humour and Spirit which existed at all and every one of the Courses between the members, quite a different picture would be conveyed. They were times of real brother-hood both for members and staff.

If anyone who was present at ''Lexden'' during any of the Courses should happen to read these notes - as it is hoped many may - they will recall without effort the influences for good which characterised them so completely and which has led to the formation of many life-long friendships. Can anyone forget those evening sessions round the Camp Fire? The banter and the jokes! The spare time activities! That matchstick at inspection! The unexpected observation tests! And the hike and the "Scouts' Own" in the Chapel!

Yes, they were glorious days - and nights - spent in learning the game of life in the way our Founder had so wonderfully devised, so that the vision of Scouting could be passed on to future generations.

For a period of two or three years Mr. G. W. von Ahlefeldt, a Transvaal Deputy Camp Chief, was able to assist in running some of the Courses.

At the Scouters Course in 1928, Messrs. Arthur Gaddum and Mawe, visiting Commissioners from Imperial Headquarters, London, rendered able assistance. At others, our old friend "Dad" Shores lent his invaluable aid in many ways, in his quiet, retiring, most able and welcome manner.

Divisional Commissioner R. Okell, Jack Withey, P. Robertshaw, F. L Simpson and others, rendered material help in many ways, and Mrs. Lloyd and Miss Lumsden, from the Transvaal, ran some of the Cub Courses.

## ===How the Camp is Equipped and Maintained===

Camping equipment in the way of tents, cooking utensils, ground sheets, lanterns, etc., is kept in the stores in the main Hall building and is available for use by any members of the Scout Movement at any time, by arrangement with the Warden, Mr. Ken G. Parker. A small charge of 3d. per head per night for use of equipment is made for each Cub and Scout and 6d. for Officers. None-Scouts pay 1/-d.

This equipment has been built up from year to year as time went on, and sufficient is now on hand to provide for sixty campers. When more than this number come arrangements are made to borrow from what belongs to the Pathfinders, stored in the old pump shed, who are always most willing to help; and when they in turn, have more than they can accommodate, they have reciprocal arrangements.

Other amenities provided for boys are shower baths and wash-houses, etc. in three different positions in the Camp. The oldest wash-house is hidden in trees just off the through road. In it is a mirror with a history. To the first South African Rover Indaba, in April 1931, four Rovers came from Harding in the oldest, old "Ford" ever seen - tied together with bits of wire and string, with wooden splints here and there to keep the contraption together. All along their journey parts kept dropping off, but arrive they did. While in camp other accessories were discarded, including the windscreen. This was salvaged and turned into the mirror, with a tablet nearby recording the event.

For many years there was no "kya" for the native boy on the property. A brick building was erected behind Mr. Mason's house in 1945, from funds bequeathed to "Lexden".

This was followed in December, 1946, with a brick Women's Block, an amenity which had been urgently required for many years. This was made possible partly by a grant from the Abe Bailey Trust Fund, through the South African Scout Council.

The main source of ordinary revenue is a grant of £44 per annum from the Natal Scout Council, of which £24 is provided by the Pietermaritzburg and. District Association. Then for many years Mr. Hugh Bryan, M.A., has collected special contributions amounting to between £30 and £40. This income just enables the finances to come out about square, with nothing over for development. The Camp and buildings are exempt from Municipal rates.

For the Wood Badge Training Courses special equipment is provided, for each Session requires its own. Pioneering, for instance, is helped by the provision of about twelve large-scale models of various types of bridges, made by the Deputy Camp Chief. For the practical work, for which the varying contours in the twelve or thirteen acres provide excellent conditions for the erection of full-size bridges, a large stock of ropes, pulleys, poles, etc. is available.

Then there are a number of small models giving ideas as to how to make oneself comfortable in camp with things made out of rough material, such as candle lanterns, pot lid lifters, roll-up table tops, mattress loom, camp beds, etc. etc.

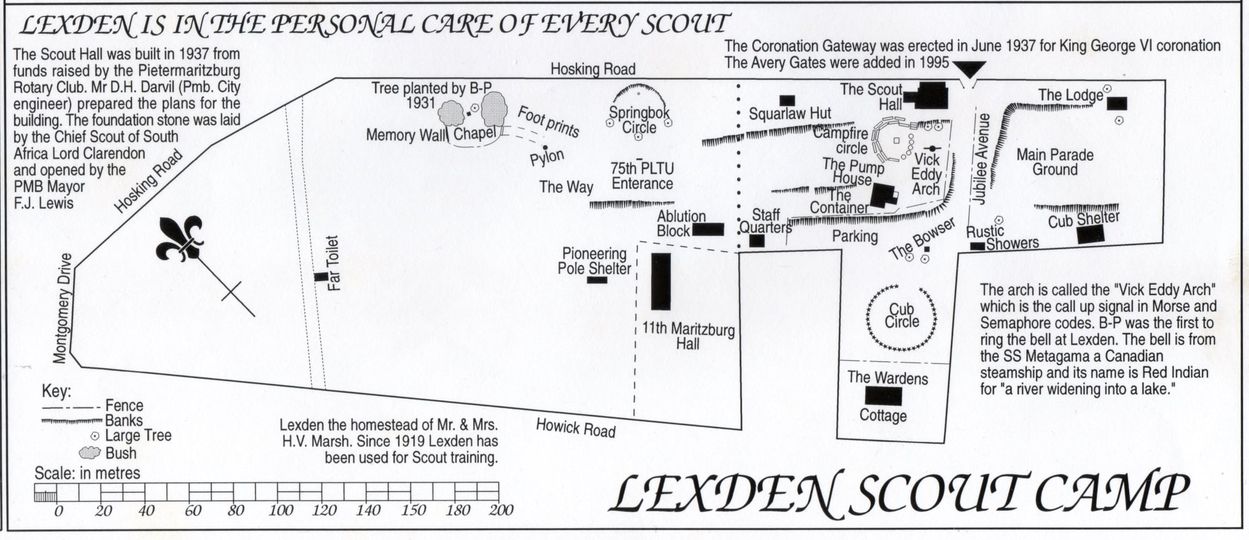
Spinning ropes and life-lines to illustrate their respective uses, materials for all kinds of active Scout games, charts for food requirements, etc. are all at hand.

Mention may be made of the portfolios of every single theoretical and practical subject called for in Wood Badge Courses, built up from the experience gained during past years, which are available for future use and stored in a steel filing cabinet.

On the bank above the main Parade Ground is the sand track, a shallow excavation about twenty feet by eight feet, filled with sand, and used for practical observation tests in the reading of footprints.

## ===Items of Interest in the Camp===

[[File:Lexden Layout 1994.jpg|200px|right|thumb]]

Boy Scout Camps are unlike any other camps in any part of the world and, "Lexden" is no exception to that rule because here we have wood-crafty articles or gadgets which give considerable interest both to visitors and Scouts.

Reference has been made elsewhere to the Scout Law Pole.

Next comes the famous "Bowser", formed with an old log with "B-P as the round "light" at the top, and its rubber service pipe. It carries an arm on which a notice is hung reading:

"Fill up here with Scout Spirit. Best for miles of smiles".

It was erected in October, 1929.

The idea was brought back from the [[World Jamborees: 1929 Report|1929 Overseas Jamboree]] held in England, by one of our representatives who attended it, the original wording being lengthened by the addition of the second clause on the notice. "B-P" stands for many words; "British Petroleum" "Best Possible' "Berger's Paints"; "Be Prepared"; etc. Boys can translate it as they like, but all sense the reference to the one and only "B-P"

"Huberta" the young hippo who travelled from Zululand down the coast through Durban to Pondoland in 1929, will be remembered by many of the older 'boys. Just at that time a log of wood was found in a local sawmill which looked just like the head of a hippo swimming in the water. This was brought up to the camp, enlivened with a pair of eyes, (red bicycle reflectors), horns, (sperm whale teeth) and a tongue (old leather belting) and turned into a seat resting on two lots and was termed "Huberta". This stood in camp until August 27th 1935, when weather was beginning to have its inevitable effect, so the opportunity was taken in good time to make a reinforced concrete cast of it, to ensure its permanency. This cement duplicate now stands near "Dick's Door" and causes endless interest.

Incidentally it may be mentioned here that a plaster cast taken from an original footprint of Huberta at Scottburgh, South Coast, hangs in the Hall, taken with the assistance of the 1st Umkomaas Troop during the huge animal's peregrinations. This is, as far as is known, the only one in existence. Duplicates have been made and presented to both the Pietermaritzburg and Durban Museums. It will be remembered that "Huberta" caused world-wide interest. She was later shot in Pondoland, resulting in her hunters being very heavily fined.

The "Air Mail" Post Box on the Main Parade Ground is used during long camps and Training Courses, for the posting of mail, by arrangement with the Postal Authorities.

"Post Box" was altogether too commonplace a name to put on it, especially as it lacks the familiar scarlet coat. "Air Mail" sounded more up-to-date, especially as it was fixed about the time these fast means of communication were becoming widely used.

Keeping in with the woodcraft idea, the hollow log is of ironwood from Deepdale with a lid of rough gum. The posting slot is a knot hole, into which a slit has been cut to enable wider letters to be inserted than the knot hole itself would allow. The idea is taken from an old Viking boat now in the Oslo Museum. The rowers had to have a wider space through which to insert their oars, than the usual size of a rowlock hole. The wide blade took up the full width of the hole plus the extra slit. Hence the adaptation of the same idea to our Camp post-box, or rather, "Air Mail".

No Camp could possibly be complete without its Clock. Near the "Pylon" stands the second sundial. It is just a log of hardwood cut off level, with the familiar lines set out with brass tacks in the end grain, the hours being indicated by metal service stars - that is as long as little fingers will let them remain there!

The gnomon, or pointer, is accurately cut to reflect correct time at the S. Lat. of Pietermaritzburg, viz. 29o 30'. An equation table, to compute exact clock time is hung on the side enabling the necessary corrections to be adjusted from solar time.

Many a novice has found that it won't work at night when he has been sent with a torch, by some older pal, to ascertain the time!

Totem Poles can be as ornate or as frightening as human ingenuity can create, but ours are plain and serve a useful purpose. The craving for carving one's name or initials on living trees or on other places where they ought not to be, is universal, so those in Camp give this craze a legitimate scope and outlet.

"Red Eagle" for instance, in the Cub Camp, provides the surface upon which the names can be inscribed of Sixers who have camped there.

Training in observation in tracking is facilitated by the Sand Track, situated on the bank above the main Parade Ground. During Scout Wood Badge Courses on its surface is indicated every type of human footprint - walking, running, blind, walking backwards, lame, drunk, carrying a burden, etc. etc., which always proves a most useful and fascinating session.

No better simple means of training in the observance of small details and the deductions to be made therefrom than that of the sand track can be put into practice to carry out the Old Chief's ideas.

## ===In the Hall===

It has always been the intention to make the Hall of permanent interest to those who have camped or been trained at "Lexden". With this objective in mind particular care has been taken to collect photographs of Groups of all Wood Badge Training Courses right from the very beginning, and these now hanging on the walls form a complete record.

Other photographs include Natal Jamboree Contingents, Patrol Leaders Courses, the Indian Scoutmasters Training Course, Rover Indabas, etc., so that there is plenty to interest old boys when they come to look round.

Over the fireplace is a brass tablet recording the gift of the original land and Hall, details of which are given elsewhere in this narrative. An original letter received from Lord Baden-Powell about the time the Hall was opened and a plaster plaque of the Chief hang in places of honour.

Round the walls hang a very fine set of South African animal horns and skulls, including lion, hippo, kudu, water buck, buffalo, springbok, sable antelope, wildebeests, etc., all presented to us by friends at various times and mounted through the kind interest of the Curator of the Pietermaritzburg Museum.

The original plaster cast of the footprint of "Huberta" the Hippo, taken at Umkomaas during her wanderings, is always singled out for attention and a section of a yellow-wood tree, grown in the Kharkloof Forest, over six hundred years old, picked out with pins in the annular rings going back to before A.D. 1300, illustrates the value of old tree life.

On the mantelpiece are some very fine specimens of fossils, donated by Scouts. Other gifts from Scouts include plaster casts of footprints and flowers, and a very fine knot board made by the 1st Pietermaritzburg Rover Crew.

The spade used by Prince George when planting his tree, and which has since been used at every similar official event, stands by the fireplace, the handle covered with inscriptions and nearby is his chair, specially made for his visit, of a locally grown gum.

A jawbone of a young sperm whale and the shell of a large turtle flank the fireplace.

The furniture in the Hall has all been donated. The teak table, chair and form were from Mrs. H. V. Marsh; the chairs from the Pietermaritzburg Rotary Club and the wrought iron fire grate from a friend in Hospital. Mrs. H. W. Greener of Howick presented a fine colour print of E. Carlos' picture entitled "The Pathfinder".

There are many other items of interest round about the Hall, too numerous to mention, all being gifts from friends at various times.

## ===Our Great Possessions===

"B-P", the Chief Scout, was [[BP's visit to South Africa in 1936|walking round the Camp]] on February, 23rd, 1936, when he turned and said a few words to Colonel Walton, the Headquarters Chief Scout's Commissioner, who was accompanying us. For a few minutes the Colonel left, then returned with a paper parcel which he handed to the Chief, who tucked it under his arm, continuing his walk.

After a while he said, suddenly, "Here, Marsh, you take this!" and thrust the parcel, without any other words of explanation, into the Deputy Camp Chief's hands. On removing the wrapper the contents turned out to be a huge Scout flag, the largest made, six feet by eleven feet six inches, on the white, binding of which the dear old Chief had written in his own hand- writing, the words "Look Up. Aim High." ": Baden-Powell of Gilwell. February 22nd, 1936." His birthday (and incidentally that of Lady Baden-Powell too).

Such a valued gift could not be received without some simple ceremony. Quickly the Gilwell Scout Flag, which was flying at the masthead on the main Parade Ground, was lowered. Prince George's chair was brought from the Hall and placed near it and all the Scouts, Cubs and Rovers in Camp were formed into a big semi-circle.

Then the Chief was invited to occupy the chair and to Scoutmaster C. J. van Heerden, 1st Port Natal Sea Scouts, was entrusted the honour of running up and unfurling this gift to the Camp, in the donor's presence, everyone standing at the salute. A short explanation was then made by the Deputy Camp Chief to those assembled on parade, and the inspiring words the Chief had written on the Flag were quoted. Three cheers have never been given more lustily and heartily than those which closed this little ceremony.

Truly his thought and gift and message are chief among our "Great Possessions".

When Prince George, Duke of Kent, visited "Lexden" on March 3rd, 1934, the opportunity was taken of obtaining his signature in the' Camp's Visitor's Book.

On March 22nd, 1947, when the Royal Family visited Durban, the Divisional Commissioner, Mr. E. P. Fowle, was happy in having the honour of entertaining them at a Natal Divisional Scout, Guide and Pathfinder Rally at Kingsmead in Durban, during which all four Royal visitors were gracious enough to sign the same Visitor's Book. Their attention was called to the late Prince George's signature - His Majesty the King's brother.

This is as the Royal Family signed:<br>

GEORGE R. I.<br>

ELIZABETH R.<br>

ELIZABETH<br>

MARGARET<br>

Thus another "Great Possession" came into the keeping of the Camp Committee. So great a value is now placed upon this book that it was decided to retain it under look and key in future, and to only bring it out for very special visitors. A new book was, therefore, donated and is now in general use.

## ===Some Principal Events and Visitors===

In recording a history covering a period of thirty years, which has been packed with incidents, it is very difficult to single out those deserving of special interest. There are many and varied recollections of outstanding Training Courses and Indabas and great Rallies for notable visitors, all of which have made their mark and left most happy memories. Necessarily only very few can be referred to here.

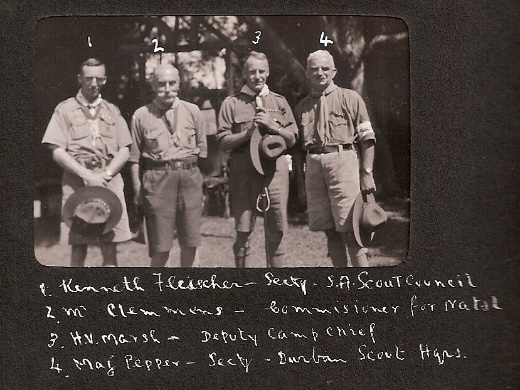
Perhaps they can be divided under two general heads:

(A) Those appertaining to actual work with youth, and<br>

(B) Special occasions marked by visits of outstanding personages.

Taking (A) first, looking back over this long past, the influences of the evening sessions round the camp fire of the Wood Badge Courses stand out above all else in the writer's mind.

They have meant so much to so many, as later lives of those privileged to be there have shown. One feels the objects in establishing and running a Gilwell have been attained when one sees the fruits of seeds sown at these happy and memorable times.

[[File: Rover\_1931\_SARSI\_RepP1.jpg|200px|right|thumb]]

Running these a close second were those wonderful Rover Scout Indaba Investitures, under the leadership of "Squarelaw", the Divisional Commissioner, Mr. E. H. Clemmans, which also always took place in the evening round the blazing fire. They were inspiring moments when these young men came forward in groups to take the Promise which was to mean so much to them in after life.

Here an opportunity may be taken to mention the great work done by Jack Withey in those early days of Rovering, whose personal interest and influence had so much to do with the growth of this Section.

The Greatest Rally the Camp has ever seen was that arranged by the Deputy Camp Chief for His Royal Highness Prince George, Duke of Kent, on Saturday, March 3rd, 1934 when Rover, Scout and Wolf Cub representatives came from Pietermaritzburg, Richmond, Mataiele, Kokstad, Underberg, Howick, Estcourt, Mooi River, Dundee and Graytown and Girl Guides from Pietermaritzburg.

It was glorious weather. His Royal Highness came straight up to the Camp from the Civic Welcome accorded to him, at the City Hall, so he was in full official uniform.

It was a respite for him from the formalities of ordinary functions, and he thoroughly enjoyed his visit.

On arrival he inspected the Rover Guard of Honour, speaking to Sea Scoutmaster C. J. van Heerden, whose uniform attracted his attention at once, for His Royal Highness was Commodore of the Sea Scout Branch of the Movement at Imperial Headquarters at that time. Then Divisional and Local Officers had the honour of presentation, our visitor shaking hands with each one.

The Wolf Cubs called him into the centre of their huge circle to give him their "Grand Howl". Everyone was delighted to see Wolf Cub Marlowe leading him by the hand up to the Council Rock - an old log which, by the way is becoming quite historic now for it has also been used by "B-P the Chief Scout, Lord Clarendon and others. It was learned later that this incident of going into the Circle was the first function in which he was alone and unattended by one of his A.D.C.s!!

On his return to the dais His Royal Highness asked the meaning of the Howl.

The idea of the Rally was the construction of a complete Camp Site, plus practical illustrations of many Scout activities.

One amusing item was a camp shower bath in action, with Scouts in bathing costume thoroughly enjoying their stunt. The playing-in by bagpipes of the famous Scout Law Totem Pole by the 1st Underberg Troop caused great interest, and fittingly concluded the first part of the programme. As all the events were timed to come on to a fixed schedule a very large clock face had been prepared, having a Scout behind it as the "works", who turned the hands so that each Troop knew when their time came.

During the interval, before moving up to the Springbok Circle for the second part of the programme, our Royal guest inspected a contingent of Pathfinders under the charge of their Divisional Commissioner Mr. D. McK. Malcolm, in whom he showed a very great interest.

After a walk round the Camp the Prince passed through the whale jaw-bone Arch to his seat. A speech of welcome was followed by a most welcome and unexpected reply. The Prince then proceeded to plant an oak tree to commemorate his visit, which to-day, fifteen years later - is growing splendidly. A promise to care for the tree and our thanks to him for planting it was made on behalf of the Camp Committee by District Commissioner H. Bryan, M.A.

All the time His Royal Highness was chatting most informally with all about him. From the many photographs taken during the eventful morning it is evident that he felt quite a home, for they all show him smiling happily.

Altogether it was a great day, with not a hitch in the many arrangements, thanks to the hearty co-operation of all concerned.

A week earlier a full rehearsal had been held. The part of the Prince was taken in a most dignified manner by Scout P. O. Gordon and Scout G. L. Cox acted as his A.D. C. All the boys thoroughly enjoyed his "acting", dressed as he was in a fine white suit, and it gave them the required confidence for the real event.

This Rally has been described in rather full detail. Others, held for the Chief Scout, Lord Athlone and Lord Clarendon, were different in detail but run on much the same lines, and were equally successful.

Mention may be made, however, of the one for Lord and Lady Baden-Powell on the 22nd February, 1936. Everything was ready in Camp down to the last tintack; everyone was assembled in position awaiting the arrival at any minute of the Chiefs, when down came the rain in torrents, washing out all possibility of holding it in the open air. Such an eventuality was not entirely unexpected however, for the bad luck of the Chiefs in regard to weather conditions is notorious! The Assistant Divisional Commissioner A. F. Hattersley had previously been given the task of making alternate arrangements for it to be removed to the City Hall, which had, very hurriedly, to be put into effect.

Everything and everybody were quickly transferred down into the town; the visitors' motor cars being requisitioned to take the Girl Guides, and the whole Show started there about half an hour later, to everyone's delight - judging by the noise anyway - and was carried completely through as planned. The Scouts and Guides filled the whole floor space and the public overflowed the balconies.

It had been arranged by the Broadcasting Authorities that Lady Baden-Powell should give a world broadcast that afternoon from the World's View Station on top of Town Hill. A motor car had, of course, been arranged to convey her there and a second one was detailed to follow her car in case of accident or delay. A lucky foresight indeed! Lady Baden-Powell had forgotten to take the notes of her address with her when leaving the Hotel! So she stopped her car halfway there, told the second driver of her dilemma, who rushed back to town to get them. He arrived up at the station with the missing document just in time for the broadcast, and all ended well.

It was some job indeed, to get the big gathering quiet in the City Hall to listen, but it came through excellently and every word was heard.

The Chief, in commenting on the quick re-arrangements, said he had never experienced such a successful operation, mentioning "No one in America could have done it".

The writer has always found that Scouts can be trusted to carry anything through when they know exactly what to do, when to do it, and have the necessaries to do it with.

## ===The Rover Scouts' Part===

[[File:Rover\_1931\_SARSI\_RepP4|200px|right|thumb]]

It is right that in any history of the "Lexden" Gilwell Scout Camp reference should be made to the active part played by the Rover Section of the Movement.

Rover Scouts started in Pietermaritzburg in 1923, the present Assistant Divisional Commissioner, Jack Withey, being one of the foundation members and originators. In that year the famous Christmas Cheer deliveries commenced, which have continued uninterruptedly ever since.

[[File:Lexden visitors.jpg|200px|right|thumb]]

In December, 1927, by which date Rovers had increased considerably in numbers, the first annual. Natal Rover Scout Indaba was held at "Lexden". The second was held in September, 1928, the third in October, 1929, followed by others in succeeding years, until the custom prevailed of holding them alternately in Durban and Pietermaritzburg.

No Rover who attended any of these early Camps at "Lexden", when Rovering was finding its feet, will ever forget the influence which emanated from the gathering together of their brothers from different parts of Natal, particularly from the Investiture Ceremonies held on the Sunday evenings.

In all these Indabas the (then) Divisional Commissioner, Mr. E. H. Clemmans, took a leading part, and it was from the Rovers, at one of these Camps, that he received his name "Squarelaw", by which he was known in Scouting circles throughout the length and breadth of South Africa, and it is largely owing to his active interest that Rovering became so well established on the right lines.

These Indabas consisted of three parts:

1st The business Sessions, when Rover subjects were discussed.<br>

2nd The "Rovers' Own", an open-air service with a helpful Address by a good speaker.<br>

3rd The Investiture or the taking of the Rover Promise by new entrants into the Movement or Section and the reaffirmation of the Promise by all others present.

Seated round a brightly burning Camp fire (when the weather permitted), under those spreading trees which formed a natural arch overhead, at the first Council Site, many a young man received inspiration which will go with him right through life. One cannot speak of it here, but it can be said that many of the associations, the Scout Spirit, the Scout atmosphere, and the influences which have grown up around the "Lexden" Scout Camp during the past years, have their solid foundations in these Rover Indabas. May these all continue to extend in the days to come!

The Rovers erected most of the fences around the Camp, and are always ready to do "spots of work" when called upon.

In May, 1932, the first Rover Scout Leaders' Training Course was held - the first in Natal. At its close the Rover Open-Air Chapel was inaugurated and four trees planted by the Mates of the Patrols who attended the Course. This Chapel is now used for the Investiture Ceremony of new recruits. The trees are growing up around it, making the seclusion the Rovers wish it to have.

One of the Rovers present day voluntary jobs is to provide Wardens each week-end, to undertake the duties of showing visitors around the Camp, for visitors are always welcome, and to repair equipment etc.

It is the intention of the Rovers to undertake the erection, themselves, under the direction of the Camp Warden, of a Hut to the memory of "Squarelaw", early in 1950.

[[Category:History and Heritage]]